

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT & TRADEMARK OFFICE

PATENT APPLICATION

OF

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FOR

LAUNDRY BASKET

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TITLE: LAUNDRY BASKET

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates generally to a laundry basket and, more
5 particularly, to a "Laundromat friendly" laundry basket that includes receptacles
for such laundry related products as soap, bleach, fabric softeners, etc., to facilitate
their storage and transportation.

For apartment and condo dwellers, the trip to the Laundromat can be a
juggling act of dirty laundry; laundry baskets; and boxes of soap, bleach and fabric
10 softeners plus a pocketful of quarters to operate the applicable washers and dryers.
All of these essential elements are typically put into a laundry basket or two and
carried into the Laundromat by the customer. Since the standard size boxes of
soap, bleach and fabric softener are targeted for home use, transportation of these
boxes along with the laundry and baskets can be a Herculean task.

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2. Description of the Prior Art

Consumers have been using traditional plastic molded laundry baskets since time in memoriam. These baskets come in all sizes and shapes according to personal preference. See, for example, U.S. Design Patent No. D348,128 which
5 issued on June 21, 1994 to Charles W. Kraft et al. for a rectangular Laundry Basket or U.S. Design Patent No. D416,116 which issued on November 2, 1999 to Janet Sofy for a bean shaped Laundry Basket or U.S. Design Patent No. D356,194 which issued on March 7, 1995 to Joseph Messina for a round Laundry Basket with a cover. Some come with wheels, e.g., U.S. Design Patent No. D440,020 which issued
10 on April 3, 2001 to Terin B. Ronson et al. for Laundry Basket on Wheels; or dividers, e.g., U.S. Design Patent No. 433,548 which issued on November 7, 2000 to Ronald Baines et al. for Laundry Basket with Dividers; or even special handles, e.g., U.S. Patent No. 5,133,472 which issued on July 28, 1992 to Walter P. Koda et al. for Laundry Basket and Handle Therefore.

15 The general idea of providing a laundry basket with receptacles or compartments for different types of clothing or to accommodate laundry products is not new. Consider, for example, U.S. Patent No. 4,981,232 which issued on January 1, 1991 to Paul W. Wynn for a Laundry Basket that includes a clothes washing products compartment as part of the basket in addition to a section for
20 clothing. Since these compartments are both contained in the context of a standard laundry basket, it offers reduced space for the clothing as well as marginally

sufficient space for boxes of laundry products.

As will be appreciated, none of these prior patents even address the problem faced by applicant let alone offer the solution proposed herein.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

Against the foregoing background, it is a primary object of the present invention to provide a molded laundry basket that includes a full sized cavity for clothing.

5 It is another object of the present invention to provide such a laundry basket that further includes provisions for such laundry products as soap, bleach, and fabric softeners.

It is still another object of the present invention to provide such a laundry basket that further includes refillable individual tubes for such laundry products.

10 It is still yet another object of the present invention to provide such a laundry basket in which such refillable tubes are releasably secured in receptacles on the outside of said basket so as not to unduly limit the storage size of the basket for clothing.

To the accomplishments of the foregoing objects and advantages, the present
15 invention, in brief summary, comprises a laundry basket of the type having a bottom wall and pairs of opposed side walls and end walls all extending upwardly from the bottom wall. The basket includes at least one receptacle formed into at least one of the side walls or end walls for receiving and retaining at least one clear plastic, refillable laundry product tube adapted to store a laundry product such as
20 soap, bleach or fabric softener. In one embodiment, a pair of receptacles are provided on opposed side walls while in an alternative embodiment, the receptacles

are formed by the handles on the end walls.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The foregoing and still other objects and advantages of the present invention will be more apparent from the detailed explanation of the preferred embodiments of the invention in connection with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

5 FIG. 1 is a side view of the laundry basket of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a top view of the laundry basket of the present invention;

FIG. 3 is an end view of the laundry basket of the present invention;

FIG. 4 is an exploded side view of the refillable tubes used for the storage of laundry products that can be used in conjunction with the laundry basket of the
10 present invention;

FIG. 5 is a perspective view of an alternative refillable tube used for storage of coins; and

FIG 6 is a top view of an alternative embodiment of the basket of the present invention in which the refillable tubes used for the storage of laundry products are
15 adapted to be inserted into apertures created as part of the handles of the basket.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Referring to the drawings and, in particular, to FIGS. 1-3 thereof, the laundry basket of the present invention, referred to generally by reference numeral 10, is of the typical plastic molded type having a bottom wall 12 and pairs of
5 opposed side walls 14 and end walls 16 extending upwardly from the bottom wall 12 defining an open top 20. The bottom wall 12 and the side walls 14 and end walls 16 may include a multiplicity of apertures or openings 22 spaced throughout the wall to facilitate air flow into and out of the basket 10. Hollow handles 25 are provided at the upper ends of the opposed end walls 14 to facilitate gripping of the laundry
10 basket 10 by a user, each of which includes a center aperture 26 with open ends 26A and 26B at the opposite ends thereof.

The laundry basket 10 of the present invention includes a pair of opposed, cylindrically shaped receptacles 30 at the top of the side walls 14 which are open at their opposite ends 30A and 30B. Receptacles 30 are adapted to receive and retain
15 one or more refillable tubes 40 which can be inserted into the receptacle through either end 30A or 30B.

Refillable tube 40, which is shown in greater detail in FIG.4, is a tube have a body 41 which is adapted to receive a laundry product such as, for example, soap, bleach or fabric softeners. In a preferred embodiment, tube 40 is a clear plastic or
20 glass tube to permit the user to see the contents contained therein. Tube 40 is closed at one end 41A and open at its opposed end 41B. Threads 47 are provided on

the body 41 of the tube 40 adjacent open end 41B. Measuring marks 42, 44 and 46 are provided as stripes around the clear tube to indicate appropriate measurements of the laundry products contained in the tube which is introduced through the open end 41A so as to facilitate dispensing of the contents in the washing machine. A cap 48 is provided with internal threads at an end 49 adapted to threadably engage threads 47 at the open end 41B of the tube 40 in order to seal same. A stop ring 50 is provided about the outer diameter of cap 48. Stop ring 50 has a larger diameter than the diameter of either the cap 48 or the receptacle 30 and serves to limit the penetration of the refillable tube 40 when inserted into the receptacle 30.

The advantage offered by the use of a refillable laundry product tube 40 is that the user can simply bring with them the amount of laundry product that is necessary for the particular trip to the Laundromat. Since the laundry product tubes 40 are refillable, they can be refilled for each trip and, as such, will not take up unnecessary room in the basket as would be the case with large boxes of soap, bleach and the like. As the use of these types of laundry baskets becomes more popular, it is conceivable that producers of such laundry products might begin to market their products in individual tubes rather than in the otherwise large, cumbersome boxes heretofore used so that users can simply purchase pre-filled tubes of such laundry products to be used in conjunction with the laundry basket of the present invention.

FIG. 5 illustrates a refillable coin tube 140 for storing the types of coins that

are used in most Laundromats, e.g., quarters, etc. Coin tube 140 includes a threaded end 147 adapted to engage a cap 148 used to close and seal the coin tube 140. The diameter of coin tube 140 is such that it can be inserted into and retained in the aperture 26 of the handle 25. Coin tube 140 may also be inserted into
5 receptacle 30, if so desired.

FIG. 6 depicts an alternative embodiment of the laundry basket 110 of the present invention having an open top 120. The basket 110 includes a pair of handles 125 at opposed ends of the basket 110 with receptacle formed as part of the handles into which laundry product tubes 140 may be inserted and stored in much
10 the same manner as they are stored in receptacles 30 of the basket 10 of the embodiment of FIGS 1-3. In the embodiment of FIG. 6, both handle 125 include such receptacles for storage of the tubes 140. No receptacles are provided on the side walls of the basket 110.

It will be appreciated that the trip to the Laundromat for the user of the
15 present laundry basket will be substantially easier than with existing products since all of the laundry products and the necessary coinage are contained in tubes that are retained in discrete areas of the laundry basket 10.

Having thus described the invention with particular reference to the preferred forms thereof, it will be obvious that various changes and modifications
20 can be made therein without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention as defined by the appended claims.